



**Graduate
Studies**

Office of the Vice-Provost and Dean
Yeates School of Graduate Studies

Final Assessment Report (FAR) and Implementation Plan

Periodic Program Review (PPR)

Graduate Program in Social Work (MSW)

Last Updated: November 3, 2021

*Renaming in process

In August 2021, the university announced that it would begin a renaming process to address the legacy of Egerton Ryerson and build a more inclusive future. Let's write the next chapter together.

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FINAL ASSESSMENT REPORT

In accordance with the University Institutional Quality Assurance Process (IQAP), this final assessment report provides a synthesis of the external evaluation and the internal response and assessments of the graduate program in **Social Work (MSW)**. This report identifies the peer review identified strengths of the program, together with opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that have been selected for implementation.

The report also includes an Implementation Plan that identifies who will be responsible for approving the recommendations set out in the final assessment report; who will be responsible for providing any resources entailed by those recommendations; any changes in organization, policy or governance that will be necessary to meet the recommendations and who will be responsible for acting on those recommendations; and timelines for acting on and monitoring the implementation of those recommendations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Master of Social Work program is a one-year, three term program for students who have an undergraduate degree in social work. Students complete 18 credit hours of coursework; a major research paper focused on research as it applies to practice; and 450 hours of field work in a practicum setting.

Consistent with the vision and mission of the Ryerson School of Social Work, the approved Ontario Council for Graduate Studies field of study for the MSW program is “anti-oppression practice with marginalized communities.” Over the past fifteen to twenty years, anti-oppression approaches have become influential across Canada within academic social work, accreditation requirements, and social work practice. For many years, Ryerson School of Social Work has garnered an international reputation as a school focused on anti-oppression practice in terms of research, service and teaching. It is the lens through which we understand theory, research and practice. The MSW strives to keep abreast of recent developments in anti-oppressive practice and as a result, our dynamic and nuanced focus has shifted toward a deeper acknowledgement of anti-Black racism and anti-Indigenous racism as well as a focus on decolonizing approaches to practice.

The School began offering the MSW in 2007 following a successful candidacy report from the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (the profession’s academic accrediting body), and received full accreditation in 2013. In November 2020 the MSW program will submit a self-study in order to apply for re-accreditation in anticipation of a June 2021 deadline.

At the time of the last review, the program was very much in its infancy. Since that time the program has stabilized into a responsive, innovative and contemporary pathway to graduate social work education for students interested in anti-oppressive and decolonizing approaches to social work.

Periodic Program Review and Peer Review Team Social Work (MSW)

The graduate program in **Social Work**, Faculty of Community Services (FCS), submitted a Self-Study Report to the Yeates School of Graduate Studies that outlined program descriptions and learning outcomes, an analytical assessment of the program, program data including data from student surveys and the standard data packages. Course outlines and CVs for full-time faculty members were also appended.

Two external and one internal arm's-length reviewers were selected from a set of proposed candidates. The Peer Review Team (PRT) for the Periodic Program Review (PPR) of the graduate program in Social Work (MSW) consisted of Dr. Mirna E. Carranza, Associate Professor, McMaster University; Dr. Dexter Voisin, Dean and Professor, University of Toronto; and Dr. John Shields, Professor, Ryerson University.

The PRT site visit was conducted virtually on March 15th and 18th, 2021. The visit included interviews with the University and Faculty Administration including the Provost and Vice-President Academic, Faculty of Community Services, Associate Dean, Vice-Provost and Dean Yeates School of Graduate Studies (YSGS); Associate Dean YSGS, Graduate Program Director of the Graduate Program, and meetings with Faculty, a group of current students, and support staff.

The PRT report was communicated to the Associate Dean, YSGS on April 26, 2021, and the response to the report from graduate program was communicated on May 25, 2021.

The Peer Review Team identified program strengths, weaknesses and opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, outlined below.

Program Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities

The program's strengths are many. As it stands now the MSW program possess — strong theoretical and practical components both—research (MRP) and clinical practice [Placement]. These are much needed for the formation of strong and critical social work professionals. The admission criteria read adequate for what is expected of the students.

Ryerson's School of Social Work is uniquely positioned, as it is located at the heart of the City. This is translated to having a diverse student body that brings about both—opportunities and challenges. Opportunities relate to bringing forth Indigenous and community knowledge or non-Western approaches to inquiry that have been historically marginalized. Thus, informing both, social work policy and practice – much needed in the social work profession. Challenges, as students coming from groups historically marginalized need much support in navigating academic spaces. Moreover, carrying their MRP usually involves much emotional invisible labour. As it stands now, the administrative personnel and faculty needed to provide academic and emotional support to bring students to a successful completion of their MRP is very slim.

Having said this, it is important to note students' reflections around the supervision of their MRP i.e., "students' cohorts got diverse experiences, given the time their supervisor had available for them". Faculty and alumni echoed this sentiment. Also, a significant tension emerged as faculty is both—very passionate and committed to the MRP, but also overextended given their multiple responsibilities i.e., teaching, pursuing their research program and citizenship. Furthermore, the time of completion of one year while also doing a placement appeared very demanding of their time. Thus, leading to exhaustion of everyone involved.

Moreover, students are required to complete course work, MRP and a social work placement over the span of 12 months. Noteworthy is the fact that students' position on the matter varied: (i) wanting to do placement only, as their main goal of pursuing graduate education was to enhance their clinical skills, (ii) wanting to do both, the MRP and placement, but over a more extended period of time, (iii) wanting to do the MRP only as their desire was to develop research skills.

Faculty members have a very active research agenda, nationally and internationally. For several, it involves community engagement and/or in their own communities. In these cases, there is an added invisible labour i.e., developing and maintaining community connections and emotionally change processes –as their research program may involve examining exclusionary processes and practices. There is a parallel between racialized faculty members and students coming from historically marginalized groups i.e., GLBTI2s, racialized and living with disabilities (visible and invisible). Thus, adding to the existing inequalities.

Summary of PRT Recommendations, Graduate Program and YSGS Responses, and Implementation Plan

A report on the progress of these initiatives will be provided in the Follow-up Report which will be due in one year from the date of Senate approval.

PRT Recommendation	PRT Rationale	MSW Response	FCS Response	Action Plan	Timeframe/Responsibility	YSGS Response
Recommendation 1: Create more flexibility and degree of choice options for the MRP.	The MRP is a major point contributing to heavy workloads for the students and faculty. Strategic modifications in the approach to addressing the MRP would go a considerable way to addressing this pressing issue.	The MRP needs to be reconsidered and recalibrated.	The Dean's Office Supports the program's response.	Discuss at MSW Committee (consisting of faculty members from the School).	MSW Committee to provide clear recommendations by the end of Winter 2023. All changes will be approved by Graduate Program Council.	YSGS looks forward to supporting the program through any curriculum modifications that may arise from this. YSGS recommends examining how the MRP helps meet the program's learning outcomes and look into ways that this can be done more efficiently and effectively. It should be noted that significant changes the MRP requirement may be considered a major modification (see Senate Policy 127).
Recommendation 2: Consider part-time program options.	There is a clear societal demand for this mode of delivery.	If viable, we would like to offer a part-time program.	The Dean's Office is in support of the program exploring the possibility of a part-time program with the understanding that there are no new spots available.	The MSW Committee will seek information from FCS/YSGS and consider implementation based on this feedback.	MSW Committee to gather information from FCS/YSGS by fall 2022, with possible implementation plan to follow.	YSGS is happy to discuss this further with the MSW Committee to determine the practicality of adding a part-time option. It is important to realize that the addition of a part-time option to a program is considered a major curriculum modification as described in Senate Policy

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						127. This requires a proposal that examines the implications of this option on, among other things, meeting the program's learning outcomes, the resources used by the program, and the mode of delivery.
<p>Recommendation 3: Review curriculum content and address gaps while considering independent study options that might support custom curricula designs.</p>	<p>Addressing student needs and opening up wider choice is of primary importance to any program. Program revision with the goal of addressing flexibility and student centred options is highly desirable.</p>	<p>Remove redundancy, make Anti-Black racism/Anti-Indigenous Racism core content, include critical clinical content.</p>	<p>The Dean's Office supports the program's response.</p>	<p>Discuss at MSW Committee.</p>	<p>MSW Committee to provide clear recommendations by the end of Winter 2023.</p>	<p>YSGS is happy to support the program through any curriculum modifications that may arise from this. Keep in mind that curriculum modifications can be categorized as one of three types of minor modifications or a major modification. Minor modifications can be created and approved more rapidly than major modifications so consideration should be made to separating some minor modifications from any major modifications, if appropriate.</p>